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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 KINGSTON 000699

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR (JMACK-WILSON) (BALVARADO) (VDEPIRRO) (WSMITH)  
L/LEI (CHOLLAND) (AKLUESNER)  
INR/IAA (GBOHIGAN)  
JUSTICE FOR OIA (PPETTY)  
TREASURY FOR ERIN NEPHEW  
INR/RES (RWARNER)  
CENTRAL AMERICAN CARIBBEAN BASIN COLLECTIVE  
AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PASS TO AMEMBASSY GRENADA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/09/17

TAGS: CJAN CVIS PREL PGOV PINR ASEC SNAR SOCI KCOR KCRM JM

XL, BR

SUBJECT: JAMAICA: FORMER NATIONAL SECURITY MINISTER AND KEY  
OPPOSITION FIGURE SLAMS PM AS "INDECISIVE" IN "DUDUS" EXTRADITION  
REQUEST

REF: REF: A. KINGSTON 684; B. KINGSTON 680; C. KINGSTON 666  
D. STATE 85807; E. KINGSTON 614; F. KINGSTON 611; G. KINGSTON 490  
H. 08 KINGSTON 884; E. KINGSTON 634; F. KINGSTON 614; G. KINGSTON 611  
I. KINGSTON 490; I. 08 KINGSTON 884

CLASSIFIED BY: Isiah Parnell, CDA; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

Summary and Analysis:

¶11. (C) The myriad political and social crises facing Jamaica - rampant crime, economic malaise, a deteriorating balance of payments, poor education, and the Government of Jamaica (GOJ)'s delay in honoring a high-profile extradition request - are a "low level explosion," and a potential breakdown of social and civic order in Jamaica is "closer than we imagine," according to Peter Phillips, Member of Parliament (MP) for the opposition People's National Party (PNP) and former Minister of National Security (MNS). However, as an opposition MP with admittedly few contacts within the current GOJ, Phillips's analysis of Prime Minister (PM) Bruce Golding's deliberations are inconsistent with those of others closer to the PM that suggest that the extradition request will be honored (Reftel A, B, C). (NOTE: PM has advised CDA that the extradition request will be denied. See Septel. End Note). End Summary.

"A Low Level Explosion"

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¶12. (C) Emboff met with Phillips on September 14 at the U.S. Embassy in Kingston. Phillips described the current state of affairs in Jamaica as a "low level explosion," in which current trends of rampant crime, youth violence, economic malaise, foreign debt (Reftel E), an inadequate educational system, and the current extradition controversy might coalesce to push Jamaica toward a "tipping point" at which the country might become ungovernable, a failed state along the lines of Haiti or Somalia. While Phillips didn't think "Jamaica is there yet," he said that such an eventuality was "closer than we imagine." Depicting "the viability

of the Jamaican state" as in danger, Phillips felt it was imperative that the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) make efforts to reform the security sector and get the nation's "financial house in order."

¶3. (C) Similarly, Phillips described the ongoing extradition controversy as exacerbating these problems in ways that might conceivably lead to the "dismemberment of the state." Having garnered headlines last week in publicly denouncing the governing Jamaica Labour Party (JLP)'s handling of the Christopher "Dudus" Coke extradition request (Reftel D), Phillips criticized the PM as "indecisive" and "looking for a reason not to act" on the request. Were the Golding government to refuse to arrest and extradite Coke, the GOJ would be implicitly admitting that large portions of the country - garrison communities in parts of Kingston, Spanish Town, Montego Bay, and elsewhere that have been governed by local "dons" and criminal syndicates for decades - were not under GOJ control. Having served as Minister of National Security (MNS) in the previous PNP GOJ, Phillips said that he could attest that the

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garrisons, including Coke's Tivoli Gardens, were "heavily armed" (NOTE: Tivoli Gardens is located in the West Kingston constituency that Golding represents in Parliament. End Note). Noting that there was "no ideological coherence" among those controlling the garrisons, Phillips worried that Jamaica would be in "big trouble" if the "dons" were ever to decide to coordinate their efforts and challenge the GOJ.

The Roxborough Institute

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¶4. (C) Phillips established the Roxborough Institute earlier this year as a means of drawing Jamaica's public leaders into a discussion of these important issues. Although Phillips doesn't

see the institute as a vehicle for his own political ambitions, he does concede that others might see it as such. However, while he envisions the organization as bipartisan and some members of the JLP have attended its lectures, he has not been successful in convincing any to join the organization's board and concedes that it is unlikely that anyone in government or in high ranking party positions would do so.

¶5. (C) According to Phillips, the intensity of Jamaica's crises demands that his generation of political leaders act or else "get off the stage" and let the next generation address them. Jamaica's political dialogue is "broken," Phillips said, and is desperately in need of a real debate over the nation's problems and its future. "Jamaica needs real analysis, not just talk," Phillips noted, while describing the nation's current political debate as too strident and heated. Although Phillips admitted that there are those in the universities addressing these problems and potential solutions, their voices aren't reaching the public at large. To fill this vacuum, Phillips described the Roxborough Institute as "something between" a university think tank and a public forum.

The "Dudus" Extradition

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¶6. (C) Although he claimed to have no direct contact with anyone within the GOJ regarding the Coke extradition matter, Phillips said

he believes that Golding is looking for a reason not to act and trying to determine how serious the U.S. is. Although they are of different political parties, Phillips went to school with Golding, has known him many years, and considers him a friend.

Nevertheless, Phillips expressed surprise at how poorly Golding has handled the issue and at how indecisive he has appeared. If the GOJ fails to act, Phillips said, much of the public may lose faith in government authority as it will have become clear that the garrison criminal syndicates hold the real power in Jamaica.

¶7. (C) Although Phillips conceded that his PNP also had ties to garrisons and organized crime, he claimed a difference of degree and that "contact is not the same as subordination." Phillips

contrasted the JLP's handling of the Coke affair with his own management of similar extradition and other high profile cases involving "dons" and drug kingpins with PNP ties during his tenure as MNS: Donald Zeeks, who was convicted and imprisoned in Jamaica;

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Donovan "Bulby" Bennett, who was killed in a police shootout; and Norris "Deedo" Nembhard and Leebert Ramcharan, who were both extradited and sentenced to prison in the U.S. Although these cases entailed protests and political costs for the PNP, Phillips contended that they were necessary and that there is no politically risk-free option for Golding.

¶8. (C) As soon as the previous PNP government knew an extradition request was imminent, Phillips said that the relevant actors - the MNS, Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (MFAFT), and the Office of the Public Prosecutor (OPP) would meet in one location, "bring their stamps," and process the request immediately so as to prevent unnecessary delay and media leaks. Then, vetted units of the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) and/or Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) would be employed to apprehend the suspect before the accused would have time to react or go into hiding. In the Coke case, however, the extradition request has taken over three weeks to be processed by the relevant ministries and is currently under consideration by the Ministry of Justice. As a result, media speculation has been rampant,

leaks have been more likely, the GOJ has lost the element of surprise, and Coke is widely believed to have sequestered himself in Tivoli Gardens where he will be difficult to apprehend.

"A Paroxysm of Violence"

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¶9. (C) Although Golding claims to have been surprised by the extradition request, Phillips contends that the PM has known the request was coming for some time and recalls briefing him on the case shortly after the September 2007 elections that brought the JLP to power (NOTE: Former Ambassador Brenda Johnson also briefed the PM on the case in early 2009. Reftel A. End Note).

¶10. (C) Phillips believes that Coke's attorney, Tom Tavares-Finson is focused on stopping the extradition, not negotiating a plea arrangement with U.S. authorities (NOTE: A law partner of

Tavares-Finson did call Embassy Kingston suggesting a "get acquainted" meeting with the new CDA, a request Emboff rebuffed as inappropriate given the pending extradition request. END NOTE).

¶11. (C) Although Coke's organization in Tivoli Gardens is heavily armed, Phillips believes it can be contained by security forces. Phillips believes that Coke essentially has three options remaining: to continue to hide out in Tivoli Gardens for the foreseeable future; to foment as much violence and destruction as possible should the GOJ attempt to apprehend him, and/or; to escape the country. Given that the element of surprise has been lost, Phillips predicted "a paroxysm of violence" and didn't foresee any prospect for Coke's nonviolent apprehension. All things considered, Phillips recommended that the GOJ try to lure Coke out of Tivoli Gardens to a location in which he would feel safe, perhaps under the guise of spiriting him out of the country, although Coke would surely be expecting such a ruse.

"He Has Not Chosen To Do The Extraordinary"

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¶12. (C) Although Golding as of yet "has not chosen to do the extraordinary," Phillips maintained that while arresting Coke at this time would carry short term political costs for Golding,

the medium and long term benefits for the PM would be positive. While an arrest might jeopardize the JLP's electoral stronghold in West Kingston and provoke dissension within his party, Golding would be a "hero" among the "silent majority" of Jamaicans who are disgusted by the crime and corruption that have crippled the nation. However, in doing nothing Golding risks losing credibility with the public.

¶13. (C) Phillips said that he believes Golding honestly doesn't know what to do, and that his hesitancy is encouraging a perception of indecision among the Jamaican population. The question in the public mind, Phillips maintains, is whether Golding is focused on the good of the JLP or the good of Jamaica? By equivocating, Golding has narrowed his options: to arrest Coke at this point will appear to be capitulation to the U.S., with an attendant loss of face and a greater likelihood of violence and bloodshed. Nevertheless, no GOJ has ever refused an extradition request, Phillips says. For Golding to do so now would damage Jamaica's international reputation and might jeopardize the GOJ's hopes for an International Monetary Fund (IMF) package. (Reftel F) (NOTE: In a meeting with CDA on September 17, the PM advised that the Coke extradition request would be denied. See Septel. End Note).

"A Strategic, Not Tactical" Approach

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¶14. (C) Phillips conceded that others within his own PNP don't necessarily share his views, as evidenced by their silence since he went public with his criticisms of Golding last week.

Despite having failed in a leadership challenge against PSM in 2008 (Reftel I), Phillips did not rule out a leadership role in the party in the future, but said he is not actively seeking it at this time. Describing his approach as "strategic, not tactical," he maintained that his 2008 critiques of PSM's leadership have been borne out by the PNP's misfortunes over the past year (Reftel H). However, Phillips said that he worried that another leadership challenge at this time would allow PSM to blame her failures on dissension and disloyal elements from within the PNP.

¶15. (C) As an example, Phillips referred to the PNP's legal challenges against several JLP MPs on the grounds that, as dual

citizens, their nominations were invalid under the Jamaican Constitution (Reftel H). In the three by-elections the Supreme Court has ordered thus far, the JLP candidates ruled ineligible won reelection handily after renouncing their non-Jamaican citizenship, while the PNP has suffered humiliating defeats and wasted precious resources (Reftel G). Phillips says that he never supported the strategy and saw it as "political opportunism, not principled," an attempt on the part of PSM at "a shortcut back to power." While Phillips conceded that there was "legitimate room for debate" as to whether noncitizens should be allowed to serve in Parliament, the issue has become "so infected by irrational passions" that time will need to pass before it may be discussed dispassionately.

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#### Conclusion and Analysis

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¶16. (C) As a key figure in the PNP and a former MNS, Phillips has a long history in Jamaican politics and keen insights into the Coke extradition case. However, as an opposition MP with admittedly few contacts within the current GOJ, Phillips's analysis of Golding's deliberations are inconsistent with those of others closer to the PM that suggest that the extradition request will be honored(Reftel A, B, C). Nevertheless, with many years of experience as MSN, Phillips's warnings as to the security implications of a Coke extradition merit attention. Finally, Phillips's vision for the Roxborough Institute and refusal to rule out a future role in the PNP leadership suggest that he foresees for himself a continuing role in Jamaican politics and public life. End Conclusion and Analysis.

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